

## Claims

1. A method of assigning a print job in a printing system, the printing system comprising at least one  
5 printer and at least one computer connected to said printer(s), wherein the or each printer has a plurality of different printing configurations and the or each computer is capable of generating at least one print job, said  
10 print job(s) having corresponding printing requirements, each printing configuration being capable of satisfying one or more printing requirements, the method comprising the steps of:

- i) creating one or more print jobs;
- 15 ii) notionally assigning the or each print job across one or more of the printers in such a way that the one or more of the printers have printing configurations that are capable of satisfying the printing requirements;
- 20 iii) calculating a cost for printing the or each print job according to said notional assignment;
- iv) repeating steps ii) and iii) at least once for a  
25 different notional assignment; and
- v) selecting according to the calculated costs a preferred assignment of the or each print job.

30 2. A method as claimed in Claim 1, in which the or each printer has a pre-existing printing configuration, and said calculation of the cost includes an assessment of the

cost of any needed changes from the pre-existing configuration(s) to changed configuration(s) so that the printer(s) can satisfy the printing requirements.

5     3.    A method as claimed in Claim 2, in which said needed changes include manual reconfiguration of at least one printer, said calculated cost then including an assessment of the cost of such a manual reconfiguration.

10    4.    A method as claimed in Claim 3, in which the preferred assignment of the printing job requires a manual reconfiguration of at least one printer, in which the printing system after selection of said preferred assignment then presents to a user of the printing system  
15    instructions for manually reconfiguring said printer(s).

5.    A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which the print job is assigned to more than one printer, and the printing system presents to a user of the printing  
20    system instructions for any or all of locating, assembling, collating, binding, or otherwise combining material printed from the printers.

6.    A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which  
25    the print job has a plurality of different parts, each part having different printing requirements, and the print job is split according to those different requirements.

7.    A method as claimed in any preceding claim, in which  
30    the calculated cost is an economic cost.

8.    A printing system, the printing system comprising at

least one printer and at least one computer connected to said printer(s), the or each printer having a plurality of different printing configurations and the or each computer being capable of generating at least one print job, said  
5 print job(s) having corresponding printing requirements, each printing configuration being capable of satisfying one or more printing requirements, wherein the printing system is arranged to calculate a cost for printing the or each print job according to different notional assignments  
10 of the or each print job across one or more of the printers in such a way that said printers have printing configurations that are capable of satisfying the printing requirements, and to select according to the calculated costs a preferred assignment of the or each print job.

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9. A method of assigning a print job in a printing system substantially as herein described, with reference to or as shown in the accompanying drawings.

20 10. A printing system substantially as herein described, with reference to or as shown in the accompanying drawings.